

# State of Louisiana

## Department of Environmental Quality

---

M.J. MIKE FOSTER, JR.  
GOVERNOR

J. DALE GIVENS  
SECRETARY

September 12, 1997

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

For more information, contact:

Lloyd Blount 504/765-0741

Gwen Emick 504/765-0249

Catherine Carlock Simpson 504/765-0511

### **1997 GREAT LOUISIANA BEACH SWEEP AND INLAND WATERWAY CLEANUP TO BE HELD SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20**

More than 5,000 volunteers are expected to take to Louisiana's beaches, bays, bayous, rivers, creeks and lakes on Saturday, September 20 to pick up after people who won't pick up after themselves. The volunteers are participants in the 1997 Great Louisiana Beach Sweep and Inland Waterway Cleanup.

Behind every piece of trash there is a face, says Louisiana First Lady Alice Foster, who is honorary chairman of Beach Sweep. This year we are targeting four groups of people who contribute most to coastal litter problems: people who smoke, people who drink beer or soft drinks, people who eat fast food and people who fish. We are asking them to live up to the responsibility of picking up after themselves so that others will not have to.

"This is a new approach to fighting litter at its source," says J. Dale Givens, secretary of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality. "We need to address the problem at the source, and educating these particular groups about the effect their littering has on the environment is a great step toward solving our litter problem in the waterways of Louisiana."

Each year, volunteers all across Louisiana join other volunteers in more than 90 countries as they spend one day removing litter from beaches and inland waterways. As the trash is collected and bagged, it is also catalogued. This data helps identify the origins of the trash, with the hope that it can eventually be stopped at the source.

"We have seen a clear trend, because of the data that we have collected in Louisiana over the years," says Givens. "Cigarette butts are the number one form of litter that we find each year."

"Enough cigarette butts to fill 30,000 packs of cigarettes were collected nationally in 1996," adds Mrs. Foster. "So our message to cigarette smokers is to put every cigarette butt into a trash can. Cigarette butts are not biodegradable. It is time to stop throwing them on the ground."

(more)

The message to people who eat fast food is the same. Put your trash in a can. Drinking straws and styrofoam cups each make up more than six percent of the trash along beaches and waterways.

“More than 65 percent of everything found during Beach Sweep can be recycled,” says Givens. “That is why we want to send a strong message to people who drink beer or soft drinks to bring these containers home for recycling. These items made up over 10 percent of the trash found during Beach Sweep.”

A new effort of Beach Sweep ‘97 is to get fishermen involved in two ways. The first is to ask them to stop throwing old fishing line and fishing nets into the waters where they fish. Broken fishing line and discarded fishing nets continue to kill fish, wildlife and marine mammals. Sport and commercial fishermen also lose time and money when the nets and lines get caught in boat motors or clog water intakes.

Second, fishermen are being asked to use their dip nets on September 20 to retrieve any trash they see in the waters where they fish, since the 5,000 volunteers on foot are not able to reach these remote areas. Members of the Coastal Conservation Association will be staffing many boat launches to hand out trash bags as fishermen launch in the morning. Volunteers will help catalog the trash as the fishermen return to the boat launches later in the day.

“The faces we see behind the trash this weekend will be those of the hard working volunteers who are taking one day to make a difference,” Mrs. Foster says. “What we want to see long term are the faces behind the litter waking up and realizing that it takes only a little more effort to put trash in a trash can, rather than throw it on the ground or in the water.”

Individuals or groups who would like to join in Louisiana’s Beach Sweep efforts can do so by contacting Gwen Emick in DEQ’s Solid Waste Division at 504/765-0249.

###